



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

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Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No.323

An Act Concerning Crane Operations

Good Afternoon Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan and Honorable members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Craig Metz and I am the Business Manager of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 478, a Labor organization that represents over 3500 heavy equipment and crane operators throughout Connecticut. In addition to representing most of Connecticut's crane operators, we also have a strong working relationship with almost every crane company in our State. For that reason, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill 323, an act concerning crane operations in the State of Connecticut.

Each year the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes data regarding the most dangerous occupations in our nation based on the number of injuries and fatalities. Statistically speaking, jobs in the construction industry always

rank among some of the most dangerous. In the past few years, in the area of the heavy construction industry there has been an increase in fatal accidents in the operation of cranes. We have all read in the newspapers and seen on the nightly news reports about the cranes in New York City that have crashed down onto workers and pedestrians. At Local 478, one of our brothers lost his leg when a steel wall toppled a crane at the Milford Power Plant while another union brother lost his life when a crane at the Sikorsky Bridge Site tumbled into the Housatonic River. We know first-hand how dangerous cranes can be.

For over three decades, Local 478 has been a strong advocate for crane safety as well as a loud voice for increasing the regulations that insure that all crane operators conform to the rules and obtain a high level of training. Our efforts have not been limited to the legislative arena as our apprenticeship and training school have developed the most comprehensive crane operator training program in the State thereby ensuring that our operators have the capacity to not only pass the licensing test but also have the ability to deal with the actual problems that can arise when they are picking tons of steel in the shifting winds. Furthermore, unlike many other entities who assist people in obtaining their licenses, Local 478 crane operators participate in on-going training that allows them to constantly refresh their skills on various types of cranes.

After the past few years of economic stress, it is easy to look at eliminating regulations and reducing laws that are thought to be counterproductive to growing business; however, we believe that by passing Senate Bill 323, the committee will be supporting a statute that recognizes that you cannot put a price on everything, especially human life. As our

economy recovers and many capital projects that were on hold are started, it imperative that the crane operators who are working on these projects are highly skilled and fully prepared to deal with the challenges that come with picking steel beams and heavy materials. After all, just like you want to be safe walking past a construction site and so too do the construction workers who are inside the site. Thanks you for your time.
